

DEPARTMENT OF TIDEWATER FISHERIES

The Commission

Chairman: Dr. Harry C. Byrd, 1963
 Albert Baker, 1960 Dr. George J. Weems, 1962
 Jeremiah Valliant, 1964 Jesse A. Fisher, 1961

Dr. Harry C. Byrd, Acting Director
 Edward S. Digges, Special Assistant Attorney General

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The Department of Tidewater Fisheries is the state agency responsible for the conservation and development of the natural resources of tidewater Maryland. The Department is managed by a Commission composed of five members appointed by the Governor for five-year terms, with overlapping tenure of office. The Commission elects its own Chairman.

The Commission formulates basic policy for the conduct of the Department, but is subject to laws governing various aspects of the tidewater resources. It undertakes, on a large scale, a "farming" operation designed to increase the supply of oysters. It also is charged with responsibility for other operations in the seafood industry, such as clamming, fishing, crabbing, etc.

All of the fishery industries are subject to certain legal regulatory restrictions. The Department is charged by law with the responsibility for enforcement of all such regulations.

The present Tidewater Fisheries Commission and the laws under which it operates are the outcome of efforts begun in 1785 when the people of Maryland and Virginia made a compact for the use of the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. However, it was not until 1830, with the passage of the first fishery laws, that Maryland became conscious of the possibility of depleting its water resources. In 1865 the General Assembly passed an oyster license law, and in 1868 it created the State Oyster Police. The oyster police force was simply an enforcement agency; it did not undertake any constructive program. In 1874 the Legislature created a new agency, the Commissioners of Fisheries. This Commission undertook the first positive efforts to develop the fisheries.

In the early twentieth century, oyster production declined to such an extent that in 1906 the Haman Act provided for a complete survey of the bottoms of the bay and its tributaries. This survey, completed in 1912, is the basis of present day Acts.

The Department of Tidewater Fisheries has a close relation with the Board of Natural Resources, which is composed of the heads of various departments relating to the resources of the State and eight members appointed by the Governor. The present law provides that the Director of the Department of Tidewater Fisheries shall be Chairman of this Board.

Appropriations	1959	1960
General Funds	\$1,198,146	\$1,232,818
Special Funds	31,000	35,000
Federal Funds	10,500	5,250
Totals	<u>\$1,239,646</u>	<u>\$1,273,068</u>
Staff: 142.		